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# Economic and Social Council

Provisional

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**Substantive session for 2002**
General segment

**Provisional summary record of the 32nd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 19 July 2002, at 4 p.m.

*President*: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)

## Contents

Regional cooperation (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 4.10 p.m.*

**Regional cooperation** (*continued*) (E/2002/15 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1 and E/2002/16-20)

1. **Mr. Kim** Hak-su (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Current Coordinator of the Regional Commissions), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2002/15 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1), said that it provided information on the activities of the regional commissions, both as outposts of the United Nations and as parts of their respective regional institutional landscape, and outlined for the Council's consideration the substantive contribution of the regional commissions to the United Nations development agenda and objectives. Addendum 3 contained resolutions and decisions adopted by the commissions that required the action or attention of the Council. In addition, the summaries of the economic surveys of the five regions (E/2002/16-20) contained valuable information and policy analysis of important regional trends and issues.

2. It being generally recognized that the commissions brought a valuable regional dimension to global development activities, their executive secretaries believed that the Council should explore ways of further integrating the various regional perspectives into debates on global development issues. The regional commissions remained committed to an effective follow-up to the major conferences. In response to the Monterrey Consensus, for instance, there should be policy dialogue at the regional level on macroeconomic financial, trade and development issues. One of the main challenges of the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development would be to translate into integrated action the different public policy criteria of economic, environmental and social sustainability. At the same time, it was important to adopt a differentiated approach in implementing global agreements, and that was best done at the regional level. The follow-up to the World Summit would offer a unique opportunity for each region to develop its own agenda, thus refining and consolidating the global agenda.

3. The regional commissions had taken stock of the reforms they themselves had instituted in order to further the Millennium Declaration goals. At recent joint meetings, it had been agreed: that their programmes of work should be better aligned with those goals and with the priority needs of the countries; that the primary beneficiaries of the commissions' activities had to be clearly defined in order to improve outreach to civil society and the private sector as well as to Governments; and that a coherent response to emerging priorities required greater coordination between the commissions and with the entire United Nations system.

4. In identifying new areas of work, the regional commissions needed to be guided by three criteria: the countries of each region had to see the areas as priorities; they should be areas where the commissions had comparative advantages and strong expertise; and they should be areas that brought the commissions' research and analysis to bear on their technical cooperation activities within an overall regional vision that concretely supported the development efforts of the countries. The resolutions and decisions before the Council reflected the results of the ongoing dialogue between commissions and countries regarding the high-priority needs of the regions and the achievement of the Millennium development goals.

5. The meetings of the executive secretaries of the commissions had proved to be a very effective coordinating mechanism, in terms of exchange of information, better understanding of specific issues and areas of common concern, and actual collaboration.

6. **Mr. Lauridsen** (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that the countries of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region had, in preparation for the World Summit, reaffirmed in September 2001 their commitment to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development with its strong emphasis on sustainable development. The European Union and its member countries, moving more swiftly than the other ECE countries, had jointly ratified the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change the previous month.

7. The European Union was determined to help the World Summit on Sustainable Development achieve action-oriented outcomes and to follow up on them effectively. The Summit should result in stronger

commitments by all countries to all three of the dimensions of sustainable development, the social, the economic and the environmental. The regional commissions, working together, were determined to play a major role in the global efforts.

8. Implementation of the Millennium development goals required greater effort and good governance by individual countries and by the international community as a whole. The Monterrey Consensus had marked a major step forward, and the welcome increase in official development assistance (ODA) announced by donor countries now needed to be made available, because international cooperation would continue to be critical for the foreseeable future.

9. The European Union had set out its long-term global objectives in its Strategy for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2001. It supported sustainable development initiatives in seven Nordic countries and also cooperated with other groups of countries on all three aspects of development. Successful regional cooperation could lead to strategic partnerships between regions, which in turn could significantly enhance the international system of cooperation. For instance, negotiations on regional economic partnership agreements between the European Union and its 77 partner countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific would begin in September, and it was supporting the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Furthermore, the European Union's own "everything but arms" initiative was an effort to promote the sustainable development of an open world economy in which trade, environment and development would be mutually supportive. Globalization offered the positive prospect of stimulating economic growth and improving living standards worldwide, but market forces had to be harnessed to preserve the environment and strengthen social cohesion while spurring growth.

10. In the social field, the European Union supported regional implementation of the recently adopted Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, which would be the subject of a forthcoming ECE ministerial conference in September 2002.

11. **Mr. Niculescu** (Romania), referring to some of the recent developments in connection with ECE, said that, at its 2002 session, ECE had addressed the economic aspects of security in Europe, one of the two major cross-cutting issues of strategic relevance to the Millennium Declaration. In the interests of an integrated approach and the establishment of common priorities, the importance had been stressed of collaboration with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the parties to the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and relevant United Nations bodies. A joint NATO/European Union colloquium that had been held in 2001 on the economic dimension of conflict prevention, with the participation of private-sector representatives, had set up a public/private partnership for peace designed to mobilize private contributions to ECE and OSCE development projects in post-conflict situations and in conflict-prone areas of the region. Also OSCE and ECE were studying possible joint action to enhance access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters.

12. In the fall, Romania would host an ECE/International Telecommunication Union (ITU) preparatory ministerial meeting for the World Summit on the Information Society that would be held in 2003; and ECE and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were jointly working to create the European Regional Network for Information and Communication Technologies for Development as a tool to assist the countries in transition. An ECE coordination meeting to be held later in the year would review new developments in Eastern and Central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, with particular attention to the economic and social aspects of security and to the regional follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

13. **Mr. Pankin** (Russian Federation) said that the regional commissions were of growing importance in promoting conditions for economic growth and stability on a regional level and in helping individual economies to integrate and adapt to the globalization process. Their most important task was to transform the multilateral dialogue on problems at the global level into specific strategies for regional development, and to that end, their role in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system at the regional level must be strengthened.

14. His delegation welcomed the decisions taken at the fifty-eighth session of ESCAP on reform and restructuring, as well as the discussions on updating working methods at ECE. As a member of two regional commissions, ESCAP and ECE, the Russian Federation

attached great importance to their assistance to countries with economies in transition in completing the process of economic reform and integration into the regional and global economy. In its cooperation with the two commissions, it attached priority to national capacity-building in the areas of compliance with international environmental conventions, the development of transportation corridors and networks, integrated energy systems and stimulation of markets and investment. In the ESCAP region, Russia's major interest was the increased economic cooperation of the far east of the Russian Federation, including the development of transportation links with other countries of the region and the participation of Russian business in programmes for the exploitation of natural resources and capacity-building with emphasis on information and communication technologies.

15. A number of recommendations on cooperation among the regional commissions, as contained in the report of the Secretary-General, should be highlighted, including sharing of information on best practices and successful activities, indicators to measure sustainable development and compliance with environmental standards, and an interregional dialogue on research into questions of environment and sustainable development.

16. The regional economic commissions should pursue active cooperation with all partners in the United Nations family, and his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that cooperation with the private sector should be strengthened in order to increase its involvement in social and economic development and sense of social responsibility. It would be useful to receive information on the effectiveness of the measures taken in the regional commissions to increase the involvement of the business sector.

17. **Ms. Serwer** (United States of America) said that the regional commissions played a vital role in fostering economic and social development. They served as useful forums for discussion of a wide range of issues, provided technical expertise, monitored progress, collected data, conducted studies, exchanged ideas and experiences, and established technical standards to benefit their member countries. Regional commissions, capitalizing on their expertise within their respective mandates, must focus on issues that served their members' interests. They should be encouraged to work closely with other regional organizations in a complementary rather than competitive way.

18. ESCAP had adopted a new streamlined structure that would enable it to respond directly to members' priorities and needs, as it focused on poverty alleviation and key emerging social issues, and to channel its resources towards areas in which it had a comparative advantage.

19. ECLAC was to be commended for its critical work in helping member States seize upon the benefits of globalization. Its formal oversight structure, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Priorities, had given them a mechanism by which to adapt the ECLAC work programme to important emerging regional issues.

20. She welcomed the efforts of ECE to improve its work, in particular the initiative to establish a consultative process with member States. Her delegation looked forward to working with ECE members and its secretariat to build a decision-making mechanism to ensure the best possible resource allocation. She also welcomed the ground-breaking work on African regional economic organizations done by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its exemplary work to support NEPAD and to include civil society in discussions of Africa's economy.

21. Her delegation supported the revised medium-term plan for the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the recognition that the Commission's ultimate goal was to assist member countries in creating an enabling environment which would stimulate sustainable development and its three components: economic development, social development and protection of the environment. She trusted that ESCWA members would make use of the Arab Human Development Report 2002, prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in their efforts to achieve sustainable development. Her delegation would continue to work with all regional commissions to strengthen their work programmes and share information and expertise.

22. **Mr. Lee** Ho-Jin (Republic of Korea) underscored the importance of the regional commissions as outposts of the United Nations and the regional expression of the Organization. They had provided important input on, inter alia, globalization, follow-up to world conferences and regional peace-building initiatives. The Council's work, including the substantive session on interregional cooperation for sustainable

development and regional challenges, would complement that work. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution on restructuring the conference structure of ESCAP. As a member of ESCAP, it remained committed to assisting the Commission in its important dual role of representing both the United Nations and the Asia-Pacific region.

23. His delegation welcomed discussion of pressing issues such as poverty, employment and technology in the context of sustainable social development and supported the focus on the Doha development agenda and the importance of regional trade. It looked forward to participating in plans for regional technical cooperation and capacity-building within ESCAP as well as further collaboration with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He welcomed the establishment of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force and hoped that it would be instrumental in closing the digital divide in the region. It was important to expand cooperation between ESCAP and the Bretton Woods institutions, the Asian Development Bank and regional organizations such as the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity. The recent Fourth Asian Mayors Forum and Regional Workshop on Good Urban Governance for Poverty Reduction and Social Development was a good example of regional cooperation. In closing, he commended ESCAP for its joint initiatives with other regional commissions.

24. **Mr. Holubov** (Ukraine) said that the regional commissions had two main functions: to respond to the specific needs of their regions and to be the regional outposts of the United Nations. They should allocate their limited resources wisely in line with those two functions. They also had a role to play in improving the coordination of regional activities within the United Nations system, which was particularly important for the promotion of interregional cooperation through joint programmes and activities, tackling of shared problems and dissemination of accumulated expertise. Coordination between the Council, the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the executive organs of United Nations agencies likewise needed to be further improved.

25. Ukraine was especially interested in strengthening the activities of ECE. In accordance with its 1997 plan of action, ECE had focused on sustainable programmes and progress had been made in further integrating cross-sectoral concerns into its activities. In order to respond effectively to the changing landscape in Europe and the demands of member States, ECE must continue its reforms in order to maximize the impact of its activities. The Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of other global conferences should serve as guidelines for the work of ECE.

26. He reiterated his delegation's support for the proposal submitted by the Eastern European States at the fifty-seventh session of the ECE, aimed at expanding the Commission's technical assistance, improving its efficiency and ensuring adequate funding. Technical cooperation should be demand-driven and focus on tangible results which had a real impact on the development of the recipient countries; it should be organized on a sectoral basis. The Commission should reinforce its fund-raising activities and improve its strategies to that end.

27. He recognized the need for enhanced coordination between the Council and the regional commissions, including exchanges of information and joint meetings. The Council had a key role to play in ensuring that regional structures contributed to international cooperation and delivered quality products to their constituencies in an efficient manner by overseeing their activities and helping them strengthen their capacity.

28. **Mr. Popov** (Observer for Belarus) said that his Government attached great importance to enhanced cooperation within the framework of the regional commissions. It welcomed their active participation in regional and interregional projects and their efforts to involve the specialized agencies in the implementation at the regional level of the decisions taken in international forums.

29. His Government valued highly the activities of ECE in a number of areas. ECE had demonstrated the effectiveness of a regional approach to solving problems involving water and other natural resources, environmental protection, renewable energy sources and transport, to name a few. New areas of activity had emerged in recent years, and ECE had demonstrated its ability to adapt to changing needs in the region. However, the increase in the work of the regional commissions had not been accompanied by an adequate increase in resources. In the view of his delegation, the question of reform of the work of the regional

commissions should be discussed in the context of the overall reform of the Council.

30. **Mr. Wang** Qi (China) said that regional economic cooperation and globalization were the two major trends in the world economy. His Government had always attached great importance to economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and had made sustained efforts to foster even closer cooperation in the belief that non-discriminatory economic cooperation would expand trade cooperation in the region and facilitate liberalization of multilateral trade investment. It intended to increase its efforts in that regard and establish even closer economic and trade ties with other countries and regions on a mutually beneficial basis.

31. As the only organization of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP had made an important contribution to the development of the region and, in the face of increasing globalization, should put its unique advantages to best use by coordinating regional economic cooperation and promoting synergies between regional and multilateral cooperation. Discussions at the ESCAP annual meeting on the theme of sustainable social development in a period of rapid globalization had provided an opportunity to discuss joint efforts to meet the challenge of globalization and strengthen exchanges and cooperation. The reform programme finalized at that meeting focused future work on reducing poverty, managing globalization and addressing emerging social issues. His delegation would reinforce cooperation with regional partners in order to contribute to increased prosperity for all countries of the region.

32. He recalled his Government's readiness to provide financial and human resources for the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery (APCAEM) in the area of Beijing and said it stood ready to further enhance cooperation with regional partners in agricultural engineering and machinery. It had also agreed to host the sixtieth annual session of ESCAP in 2004 in Shanghai, which had been the birthplace of the Commission and was in the forefront of China's reform and opening-up process.

33. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) said that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) must continue to play an essential leadership role in helping meet the challenges and priorities of increased regional integration within an open regional structure. It should expand and strengthen coordination with regional and subregional organizations and should continue its efforts to promote the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and enhance the physical integration of the region.

34. The regional commissions played an important role in ensuring the success of international conferences, and ECLAC had made an important contribution to the Monterrey Conference and the preparatory work for the World Summit on Social Development. Her Government was committed to sustainable development and the outcomes of the Rio Conference and had hosted two important regional meetings recently: an ECLAC/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) meeting the previous October on preparations for the World Summit on Social Development in the light of the Rio outcomes and a forum of environment ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean in May. The latter had developed a Latin American and Caribbean proposal for sustainable development which dealt with common actions in areas such as biodiversity, energy, and water resources, and covered the issues of vulnerability and sustainable development for cities. It also included institutional aspects such as training, development of indicators and the importance of participation by civil society in sustainable development efforts.

35. She trusted that that proposal would be taken into account in the World Summit outcomes. It provided for a platform of cooperation which, although expressed within a regional context, remained open to participation from civil society and international partners. Its success would depend not only on the countries directly involved but also on support from the international community.

36. **Mr. Valera** (Mexico) noted the positive role played by ECLAC in preparing the International Conference on Financing for Development. The Monterrey Consensus defined a new international architecture for development based on implementation of commitments through the concerted efforts of the United Nations and follow-up mechanisms. ECLAC would play an important role in implementing the Monterrey outcomes and would add its efforts to those of Member States and other regional commissions in identifying points of convergence and complementarity at the upcoming World Summit on Social Development.

37. **The President** drew attention to the recommendations contained in document E/2002/15/Add.3.

*Draft resolution on restructuring the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*

38. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

*Draft resolution on place and date of the next session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean*

39. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

40. **The President** suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields and its addenda on global meetings, cooperation with other regional bodies, and matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention (E/2002/15 and Add.1-3 and Add.3/Corr.1), the summary of the economic survey of Europe, 2001 (E/2002/16), the summary of the economic and social situation in Africa, 2001 (E/2002/17), the summary of the economic and social survey of Asia and the Pacific, 2002 (E/2002/18), the summary of the economic and social survey of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2001 (E/2002/19) and the summary of the survey of economic and social developments in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 2001-2002 (E/2002/20).

41. *It was so decided.*

42. **Ms. Tallawy** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia) said that the Council had just taken note of the ESCWA decision on its medium-term plan. The Commission had reorganized its programme of work, cutting the number of activities in order to concentrate on the priorities of its members, which lay in four crucial areas: water, technology, globalization and WTO agreements, and social policy. In its restructuring, the Commission had created a new division on technology and another on globalization. The report of ESCWA was not yet complete, as a special session would be held to adopt the new programme of work before submission of the report to the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

*The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.*